

GENERAL ASSEMBLY RENEWAL MEETING  
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

NOVEMBER 4/5, 1993

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The questions...

- 1) What do you think from the perspective of Reformed theology, should be the primary purpose of the General Assembly session?
- 2) Should the legislative emphasis of the session be decreased and the learning/inspirational content increased?

-- invite an inquiry into the nature of the church. And, from the perspective of my Reformed heritage I am reminded initially of what the church is not.

The church is not a hierarchy, clerical or bureaucratic. Not that hierarcies and bureaucracies don't become convinced of the opposite. The altercations in Wittenberg and Geneva, however, remind me that the church is the people of God, gathered and dispersed in the name of Jesus Christ, energized and led by the Holy Spirit. And that ecclesiastical systems, including hierarchies and bureaucracies, exist to assist the church to be faithful.

Thomas Jefferson's suggestion that organizational systems need an occasional revolution to remind them of the reason for existing is provocative. We are, I believe, in the middle of one, a gentle revolution to be sure, forced on us by the hard realities of shifting financial support, but a genuine revolution nevertheless.

So the meeting of the General Assembly, reduced in time because of financial constraints, ought to be measured by the degree to which it helps the Presbyterian Church to be the church faithfully, to identify what the Church perceives to be God's will, and then holds the church accountable for the doing of its mission.

We are not the established church of the realm. We cannot be all things and do all things. We can no longer try to do things we used to do because we don't have enough money.

Regarding meetings of the General Assembly -- we have, I think, three alternatives with several variations on the themes.